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Playing with Jupiter in Heywood's Play of the Weather

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Sous la direction de Marie-Luce Demonet

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# Dieu et les dieux

## dans le théâtre de la Renaissance

Actes du XLV<sup>e</sup> Colloque International d'Études Humanistes  
01-06 juillet 2002

Couverture: *La naissance de Dionysos*, détail d'un bas-relief, martelé par des iconoclastes, de la parodos du théâtre de Pergé (Asie Mineure) — cliché J.-P. Bordier.

## Remerciements

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Au moment de réunir pour publication les communications présentées durant le Colloque International d'Études Humanistes, du 2 au 6 juillet 2002, consacré à « Dieu et les dieux dans le théâtre de la Renaissance », les organisateurs expriment leur très vive gratitude aux différents responsables des Collectivités territoriales et des Institutions Universitaires auxquels ils doivent d'avoir matériellement et financièrement pu préparer une importante et fructueuse rencontre.

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Nora HELWEG

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[...] for by experyens we see

That Gentyll condycyons most commently be  
In them that be of noble blode borne. (l. 1050-1052)

Thus it may be seen that the two upper class characters have conceded nothing at all. They show no recognition of the radical issues raised in the dialogue. If this point in the text is regarded as the true end of the piece then one would have to conclude that the playwright, aware of the likely response of his hall or court audience, grants them a release from the implications of the Ploughman's challenge. The Ploughman's role might then be fairly compared to the temporary status of « Misrule ». But this would be difficult to sustain since the Ploughman has throughout dominated the discussion. He is, for instance, given more than 50 % of the dialogue, the Knight 30 % and the remainder to the Merchant. This disproportionate distribution would seem to indicate that the playwright has a quite specific interest in promoting the views expressed by the Ploughman despite the way in which the structure of the ending leads to an apparent inconclusiveness.

This then creates a situation that gives considerable significance to the entry of the Philosopher to deliver the Epilogue which takes up the Ploughman's cause. As Joel Altman has argued the entry of the Philosopher makes the play an excellent example of a *controversia* that reveals the progressive aspect of an argument « in utramque partem »<sup>19</sup>. Thus the play reveals a genuinely dialectical dimension. Two at first irreconcilable points of view are brought into a necessary collocation. The epilogue gives final authority to the most privileged but perhaps least immediately acceptable of those discourses. While, therefore, it may remain questionable whether Rastell was responsible for the whole piece the tenor of the epilogue as well as its links with the dissident ideas represented through the Ploughman continue to make a strong case on his behalf.

What this episode in theatrical history illustrates, then, is the fact that Rastell, as a representative figure of the age, is finding novel theatrical means for the expression of doubts and questions about the dominant narratives by which people are persuaded to accept traditional hierarchies of authority. In order to achieve this he has chosen to exile the Deity and his dominant narratives from the public stage. So the Deity has indeed been displaced by a human concern, may be even a humanist one.

19. Altman J.B., *The Tudor Play of Mind*, Berkeley, Univ. of California Press, 1978, p. 496.

Greg Walker

## Thunderbolts and Lightning (Very, Very Frightening?): Playing with Jupiter in John Heywood's *Play of the Wether*<sup>1</sup>

John Heywood's « new and... very mery enterlude of all maner wethers »<sup>2</sup>, now commonly known as *The Play of the We[the]r*, has long been thought to reflect the political events of the moment of its creation, although opinions differ over when precisely that moment was. David Bevington and others initially favoured a date in the mid-1520s<sup>3</sup>, then Alistair Fox and I, working independently in the later 1980s, argued that it was written and performed in 1529-1530<sup>4</sup>. While interpreting the play quite differently, we each saw it as an immediate response to (and reflection upon) the fall from favour of Cardinal Thomas Wolsey, the shift in royal governmental style that followed, and the turbulent events of the first session of the Reformation Parliament that began in November 1529. Subsequently Richard Axton and Peter Happé's edition of Heywood's plays appeared, suggesting per-

1. I should like to record my gratitude to the Leverhulme Trust for funding the period of research leave during which this paper was written through the award of a Major Research Fellowship. I am also very grateful to my colleague Dr Anne Marie D'Arcy, who generously read the essay in draft and offered many helpful suggestions and references concerning the iconographic traditions available to Heywood for the portrayal of Jupiter.

2. All quotations are from the text in Axton R. & Happé P. (eds.), *The Plays of John Heywood*, Cambridge, D.S. Brewer, 1991; see also Walker G. (ed.), *Medieval Drama: An Anthology*, Oxford, Blackwell, 2000.

3. Bevington D., *Tudor Drama and Politics: A Critical Approach to Topical Meaning*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard Univ. Press, 1968, p. 64-70.

4. Fox A., *Politics and Literature in the Reigns of Henry VII and Henry VIII*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1989, p. 252-254; Walker G., *Plays of Persuasion: Drama and Politics at the Court of Henry VIII*, Cambridge, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1991, p. 133-168; *Id.*, *The Politics of Performance in Early Renaissance Drama*, Cambridge, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1998, p. 88-101.

suasively that *Weather* may well have been performed still later, perhaps as late as March 1533, and so might reflect not only those earlier events but also Henry VIII's subsequent assault upon ecclesiastical liberties, his adoption of the title of Supreme Head of the Church in England, and the « Great Matter » of his attempts to secure the annulment of his marriage to Catherine of Aragon and contract a new marriage to Anne Boleyn<sup>5</sup>.

If Axton and Happé are correct (and what follows will accept that they are), *The Play of the Wether* presented its « mery » account of the court and person of Jupiter, king of the gods (a figure with clear associations with Henry VIII)<sup>6</sup>, to the king and his court at the precise moment when Henry's royal ambitions were seemingly at their peak and his assertions of jurisdictional omniscience in both secular and ecclesiastical politics at their most vehement and contentious<sup>7</sup>. *Wether* may well thus have been, as Axton and Happé suggest, Heywood's « most politically audacious » interlude<sup>8</sup>. For, as we shall see, it subjects the king, through his divine classical analogue, to deflating (even, in Bakhtinian terms, « uncrowning ») irony in an « Erasmusian », « Lucianic » attempt to laugh him out of folly and counsel caution in religious policy<sup>9</sup>.

5. Axton R. & Happé P. (eds.), *The Plays of John Heywood*, op. cit., p. xiv and 50-52; Forest Hill L., *Transgressive Language in Medieval English Drama: Signs of Challenge and Change*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2000, p. 135-136.

6. John Skelton had used Jupiter as an analogue for Henry in his *Speke, Parott* (152), thus perhaps establishing a precedent, see Scattergood J. (ed.), *John Skelton: The Complete English Poems*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1983, p. 242, l. 399 and p. 243, l. 405-410; and Walker G., *Plays of Persuasion*, op. cit., p. 148-149. More generally, the god was used as a symbol for what Vives called « the majesty of kingship » (Vives J.-L., *On Education*, cited in Baldwin T. W., *William Shakespeare's Small Latine and Lesse Greeke*, 2 vols., Urbana, Univ. of Illinois Press, 1944, I, p. 194). More direct links between classical deity and Tudor sovereign will be identified in what follows.

7. R. Axton and P. Happé (*The Plays of John Heywood*, op. cit., p. 52) remain agnostic concerning the interlude's auspices, suggesting a performance to either the court or « a coterie of like-minded Roman Catholics in the London household of a baron of the realm ». In a subsequent essay Peter Happé has suggested « it was more likely intended for a court performance, though there remains a possibility that it was meant to be given in the house of an eminent person who might have influenced court matters obliquely », Happé P., « Laughter in Court: Four Tudor Comedies (1518-1585) from Skelton to Lyly », in Mullini R. (ed.), *For Laughs (?): Puzzling Laughter in Plays of the Tudor Age: Tudor Theatre, Collection Thémis VI*, Bern, Peter Lang, 2002, p. 111-127, p. 111. What we know of Heywood's milieu and employment history suggests to me that a production in the royal household was the more likely.

8. Axton R. & Happé P., *The Plays of John Heywood*, op. cit., p. 52.

9. Cameron K. W., *John Heywood's « Play of the Wether »*, Raleigh, North Carolina, Thistle Press, 1941, p. 20-26. The inspiration for Jupiter's hearing of contradictory suits probably came

Another Henrician courtier-poet, Sir Thomas Wyatt, was to hit upon an aptly jovial meteorological metaphor for the extreme perils of life close to the seat of power, borrowing the tag « *circa regna tonat* » (translated by R.A. Rebholz as « he thunders around thrones ») from Seneca's *Phaedra*<sup>10</sup>. But in crafting *Wether* Heywood seems to have been oblivious to the threat of thunderbolts and lightning from a king notoriously protective of his royal prerogative and honour. How and why might this have been so? And what might this tell us about both Heywood's own position and the moment at which he was writing? In order to answer such questions it is necessary briefly to remind ourselves of the nature of the play itself – in which Jupiter enters the playing space announcing his adoption of new and far-reaching powers over the weather, and then settles down to receive petitions from his earthly subjects concerning how best to exercise them – and the political and religious context in which it was written.

### Mery Report and the Context of Performance

Jupiter's account, in his opening speech, of a parliament in heaven, « late assembled by comen assent/For the redres of certayn enormytees » (l. 24-25) strongly suggests an allusion to the Reformation Parliament<sup>11</sup>, which

from scenes in *Icaromenippus* and *The Double Indictment*. In the former Menippus, having flown to heaven on wings taken from a vulture and an eagle, is allowed to witness Zeus listening to the contradictory prayers of mariners for north and south winds, of farmers for rain and washer-men for sunshine, although the god explicitly rejects a number of the « impious » prayers in this scene, see *Icaromenippus: or The Sky-man*, in Harmon A.H. (ed. and transl.), *Lucian*, Loeb Classical Library, 8 vols., London, Heinemann, 1915, II, p. 267-333, 303-312. In the latter rival suitors appear before the god in person. Heywood may well have found further inspiration from a number of other dialogues. In *The Double Indictment* and *Zeus Rantis* (Harmon A.H., *Lucian*, op. cit., II, p. 90-169), the comic relationship between Zeus and Hermes is played upon, and the latter acts as his father's herald and court usher. The inconveniences and confusion caused by the contradictory claims and demands of philosophers are also a regular theme of the dialogues, see, for example, *Icaromenippus*, op. cit., p. 277-299; *The Double Indictment*, in Harmon A.H., *Lucian*, op. cit., III, p. 85-151, and Forest-Hill L., « Lucian's Satire of Philosophers in Heywood's *Play of the Wether* », *Medieval English Theatre*, 18, 1996, p. 142-60, p. 142-145. For a useful overview of Lucian's habitually irreverent treatment of the gods and its implications, see Branham R.B., *Unruly Eloquence: Lucian and the Comedy of Tradition*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard Univ. Press, 1989, p. 136-144; Duncan D., *Ben Jonson and the Lucianic Tradition*, Cambridge, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1979, p. 1-41.

11. Rebholz R.A. (ed.), *Sir Thomas Wyatt: The Complete Poems*, London, Penguin, 1978, p. 424-425. Walker, G., *Plays of Persuasion*, op. cit., p. 154-599; Fox A., *Politics and Literature in the Reigns of Henry VII and Henry VIII*, op. cit., p. 253.

Lord Chancellor Sir Thomas More had opened with a call to reform both « very insufficient and unperfect » old laws and « divers new enormities [...] sprung amongst the people, for the whiche no law was yet made to reforme thesame [...] ». Rather than settling down to peaceful discussion as instructed, however, the assembly had quickly degenerated into fractious disputes between the clergy and laity when the latter « assembled in the nether house [...] [and] began to common of their grefes wherwith the spiritualitie had before grevously oppressed them »<sup>12</sup>.

It is possible that there are direct allusions to prominent contemporary individuals in Jupiter's account of the four « weather gods », Saturn, Phebus, Eolus, and Phoebe and their dispute in the Olympian parliament.<sup>13</sup> But beyond such potential specificity, there is a general contemporary resonance to the opening of the interlude, concerned as it is with a turbulent parliament and a realm divided between mutually antagonistic social groups and classes<sup>14</sup>.

The play also rooted more generally in contemporary situations, revealing in particular an abiding interest in the textures and material culture of life in the royal household, an interest reflected most obviously of all in the figure of Mery Report, the play's most striking creation. The latter is the mouthpiece for a variety of perhaps genuine concerns as well

as a good deal of in-house humour concerning the staff and protocols of the English royal household. This environment was, of course, one with which Heywood was most intimately familiar, being himself a courtly entertainer, singing man, player of the virginals, and probably also at this time a sewer of the King's Chamber (and so a household servant in the formal as well as the merely practical sense).

In Mery Report, as I have argued elsewhere, Heywood offers a representation of contemporary worries concerning the unruly court « hanger-on » as a source of both social and sexual misrule<sup>15</sup>. The character, identified on the title-page of the printed text as « the Vice », oversteps the accepted protocols of courtly behaviour in both the political and moral spheres, treating Jupiter with an informality bordering on disrespect, and subsequently subjecting the suitors to his court with a mixture of social and sexual harassment, bawdy wordplay, and abuse. Such behaviour seems, in part at least, to draw its energy from an ongoing concern among legislators and pedagogues alike with the inappropriate and unruly conduct of certain suspect social groups at court (chiefly referred to as « rascals », « vagabonds », or « boys »); a concern that permeated the courtly conduct books and surfaced from time to time in prohibitive ordinances and legislation<sup>16</sup>.

15. Walker G., *Plays of Persuasion*, op. cit., p. 138-142.

16. In this context both Cameron (*John Heywood's « Play of the Welier »*, op. cit., p. 45) and R. Axton & P. Happé (*The Plays of John Heywood*, op. cit., p. 51) cite those clauses of the Eltham Ordinances of 1526 designed to restrict the access of « boys and vile persons » to the area around the doors of the king's Chamber. We might also note the proclamation issued in 1533, within months of the putative date for the performance of *Welier*, which ordered « all vagabonds, masterless folk, rascals, and other idle persons which have used to hang on, haunt, and follow the court » to depart within twenty-four hours or face imprisonment, and declared that thereafter, no courtier or officer « of what estate or degree he or they be of, shall suffer any of his or their servants to enter the king's gate but such as shall be like men to rest in good order, excluding from them in any wise all boys and rascals, upon pain of the king's grievous displeasure », Hughes P.L. & Larkin J.F. (eds.), *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, 3 vols., New Haven, Yale Univ. Press, 1964, I, p. 211-212. Note also the further injunction in the Eltham Ordinances restricting « the great confusion, annoyance, infection, trouble, and dishonour that ensueth by the numbers as well of sickle, impotent, inable, and unmeete persons, as of rascals and vagabonds, now spread, remayning, and being in all the court », and the prohibitions in the same document against the encroachments of « boys or rascals », « vagabonds and mighty beggars » at court. (The Society of Antiquaries, *A Collection of Ordinances and Regulations for the Government of the Royal Household Made in Divers Reigns*, London, John Nichols, 1790, p. 146-147, and 150. The passage cited by Cameron is at p. 152). The struggle to exclude undesirable classes and individuals from the innermost areas of the royal household was, however, a perennial feature of court life. The, so called, *Black Book of Edward IV*, a detailed series of regulations and ordinances covering every aspect of

12. Hall E., *The Union of the Two Noble Families of Lancaster and York*, Scolar Press Reprint of the 1550 ed., Menston, Scolar, 1970, p. 764-765.

13. Might the « fallen » « father moste aincient » (l. 6 and 37) represent Wolsey, and Phoebe Henry's new consort Anne Boleyn? (Axton R. & Happé P., *The Plays of John Heywood*, op. cit., p. 51-52.) And, taking this suggestion further, might Eolus and Phebus suggest the Dukes of Norfolk and Suffolk, each of whom had cause to distance themselves from both Wolsey and Anne while the Reformation parliament was in session? If this reading is correct, then perhaps the eclipsed Saturn's « frosty mansion » might be, not Whitehall but Esher or the more northerly (and so more « frosty »?) houses in the Cardinal's York archdiocese to which he was sent in internal exile after his fall in 1529. It might even suggest Leicester Abbey, Wolsey's final resting place, where he died of a (possibly deliberately self-induced) flux on his way back to London in 1531. Equally plausibly, one might take the allusion to be to Henry VIII's literal father, Henry VII. The context of the description, however, with its deliberate and arch references to its « ancient » setting, would seem to militate in favour of a more conventional, classical frame of reference. For the classical and iconographic traditions behind the idea that Jupiter's benevolent aspect « neutralised » the harmful effects of Saturn's malign influence, see Klibansky R., Panofsky E., & Saxl F., *Saturn and Melancholy: Studies in the History of Natural Philosophy, Religion, and Art*, London, Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1964, p. 140 and 271 sqq.

14. That events in the Olympian parliament and the suitors in the play are symptoms of the same disorder and provide a political lesson to the audience is made clear in Jupiter's statement that « Such debate as from above ye have harde/Suche debate beneath amonge your selves ye se./As long as heddes from temperance be deferd./So longe the bodies in

There is probably also an element of criticism here of those household officers and royal companions – most obviously the Yeomen Ushers of the Chamber, whose job it was to guard the Chamber doors and ensure that no undesirable persons were allowed access (see Appendix), and the Gentlemen of the Privy Chamber, the newest and most intimate of household offices, who gained authority and influence from their proximity to the king, and who were appointed directly by the sovereign according to his whim or personal preference, so by-passing the normal channels of patronage and recommendation<sup>17</sup>.

More overtly there was also a wry treatment of the thankless lot of the loyal and honest household servant, the man who does not exploit his office for personal gain but relies upon the allegedly meagre legitimate rewards that it affords.

Every man knoweth not what goddes servyce is;  
Nor I my selfe knew yt not before this;  
I thynke goddes servauntes may lyve holyly,  
But the devyls servauntes lyve more meryly.  
I know not what god geveth in standynge fees,  
But the devyls servauntes have casweltees  
A hundred tymes mo than goddes servauntes have. (l. 986-992)

If, as Axton and Happé persuasively suggest, Heywood himself played the part of Mery Report, leading a cast otherwise made up largely, or even exclusively, of boy actors drawn from among the choristers of the Chapel Royal or St Paul's<sup>18</sup>, then the potential ironies and inversions of role and expectation involved in the performance would have been all the more rich and various. Here was a household servant, moonlighting as an actor in a play of his own devising, who seeks employment within that play as a household servant to a sovereign (with an obvious resemblance to his real employer Henry VIII) who was played by a boy for whose musical instruc-

<sup>17</sup> tions court be sought out and avoyded from every offyces monthely » (a clear recognition of the intractability of the problem), and drew up a due process of examination and punishment for any household officers suspected of themselves being « a theof or outrageous royatour in much haunting sclauderous places, companies, and other » or those « known for a comyn dayly drunkyn man », Myers A.R. (ed.), *The Household of Edward IV: The Black Book and Ordinances of 1478*, Manchester, Manchester Univ. Press, 1959, p. 63 and 162-163.

<sup>18</sup> Walker G., *Plays of Persuasion*, *op. cit.*, p. 138-142.

<sup>19</sup> Axton R. & Happé P., *The Plays of John Heywood*, *op. cit.*, p. 11-13 and 26.

tion he, Heywood, may have been responsible. Heywood was donning a role that was already his own, wittily proclaiming his inadequacy to perform it. But the schoolmaster has become the servant, and the pupil the prince; the grave schoolboy must strive to maintain order on stage while the naughty tutor breaks all the rules.

That this performance was the centrepiece of a production put on, most probably, for the entertainment of Henry himself and his court, would have effectively blurred the distinctions between one form of royal service, one form of household performance, and another, between the actors' roles as household servants and their service as actors in a household play. In such a production it seems almost futile to try to distinguish between play-world and real world (what Robert Weimann has recently termed the « world-in-the-play » as against the act of « playing in the world », and T.C. Bishop has referred to simply as the « there » of narrative and the « here » of performance<sup>19</sup>). The actors are acting out fictional events set in the great hall of a fictional king in the real great hall of a king, and they play for the court's entertainment a world so similar to their own that it is almost indistinguishable from it. And Heywood characteristically plays up the resonances that this ambiguity creates for all that they are worth.

In accepting Mery Report into his service, Jupiter seems to be committing the cardinal sin of the prince in the courtly Morality tradition, inviting into his confidence a minion with no concern for either justice or protocol, whose sole aim is to follow his own inclinations. Indeed, in his lengthy speech of self-justification, Mery Report tacitly puns on the senses of disinterested and *uninterested*, claiming that his fitness for appointment as a royal herald is evident most obviously in his capacity to be « indyfferent » and « wythout affecyon » (l. 154-155) towards any of the petitions that are likely to arise.

Son lyght, mone lyght, ster lyght, twy lyght, torch light,  
Cold, hete, moyst, drye, hayle, rayne, frost, snow, lightning, thunder,  
Cloudy, mysty, wyndy, fayre, fowle, above hed or under,  
Temperate or dystemperate – what ever yt be,  
I promyse your lordshyp all is one to me. (l. 156-160)

<sup>19</sup> Weimann R., *Author's Pen and Actor's Voice: Playing and Writing in Shakespeare's Theatre*, Cambridge, Cambridge Univ. Press, 2000, *passim*; Bishop T.C., *Shakespeare and the Theatre of Wonder*, Cambridge, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996, p. 2 sqq.



Thus the carelessness and irresponsibility that will become the stock-in-trade of the Vice in later interludes are repackaged here as the impartiality of the good counsellor and the honesty of the loyal servant. But the appointment of a rogue to a position of influence at court, a move that in Skelton's *Magnificence* (probably performed at court in 1519) brings political catastrophe and personal ruin, is in Heywood's interlude merely the cue for a series of comic vignettes more reminiscent of a comedy of manners rather than a political satire. Jupiter's negligence provokes no catastrophe. The state does not totter, even a little, and everything turns out well in the end, with Jupiter being able to please everyone – seemingly all of the time – without ever exercising his new-found powers. How is this happy ending achieved? There are hints of the situation described by Henslowe in Tom Stoppard's script for *Shakespeare in Love*: « What do we do? » « Nothing. Strangely enough it all turns out well. » « How? » « It's a mystery. » (*Shakespeare in Love*, Miramax Films, 1998). But there is more to it that serendipity or the miraculous. Heywood's Jupiter is able to satisfy everyone by doing nothing precisely because nothing is really wrong. The petitions of his subjects do not identify real injustices – something rotten in the meteorological state of Henrician England – they are merely attempts to unsettle a stable polity in the pursuit of personal comfort or prosperity. Hence the solution is simply to ignore each of the requests while seeming to listen to them all; a policy that the self-centred and solipsistic Jupiter is ideally suited to perform. Unlike Skelton who saw evil-counsel about the king as a serious problem and the « expulsion of the minions » of 1519 as a necessary means of purging the household, and so forged a drama to stage and celebrate that event<sup>20</sup>, Heywood flatters Henry and his courtly audience by presenting a state secure in its fundamentals; the only threat to which comes from the partisan motives of its selfish citizenry.

Heywood's interlude is thus « Lucianic » not only in its comic spirit and inspiration but also in its outcome and political ethos. As Robert Bracht Branham puts it, Lucian's dialogues ultimately « evoke a static mythical world at once strange and familiar, rather than tell a story [...] Each conversation coheres as a unit [...] with a beginning, a middle, and

20. Walker G., *Plays of Persuasion*, *op. cit.*, p. 60-101; *id.*, « The Expulsion of the Minions of 1519 Reconsidered », *Historical Journal* 32, 1989, p. 1-16, reprinted in revised form in *Id.*, *Persuasive Fictions: Faction, Faith, and Political Culture in the Reign of Henry VIII*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 1996, p. 35-53.

an end, which, far from surprising us with a punch line or unexpected [...] ending, usually serves to return us to the beginning »<sup>21</sup>. In this aspect of the dialogues Heywood found a usefully flexible serio-comic approach to parody and satire, imitation of which allowed him to tilt at serious targets playfully – the feature which arguably commended Lucian most obviously to Erasmus and More in the heyday of humanist reform in the first decades of the century. But in Lucian Heywood also found an ultimately conservative ethos, and a wry but essentially tolerant attitude to the absurdities of the *status quo* that equally suited his own agenda in the very different circumstances of the period 1529-1533<sup>22</sup>.

If Axton and Happé are correct both about the dating of the play to around March 1533 and in their claim that the scenes between and among Mery Report, Jupiter, and the Gentlywoman are filled with in-jokes concerning Anne Boleyn, her pregnancy, and Henry's willingness or otherwise to marry her (he had, of course, already discretely married her in January 1533, a fact that may well have been an open secret in inner-court circles by March), then the comic resonances of the play would be all the more pointedly mischievous<sup>23</sup>. Henry's desire to keep his marriage secret may well be alluded to in the exchanges between the god-king and his squire:

MERY REPORT: And yf yt be your pleasure to mary

Speke quyckly, for she [the Gentlywoman] may not tary.

In fayth I thynke ye may wynnre her anone,

For she wolde speke wyth your lordshyp alone.

FURTHER: Sonne, that is not the thyng at this tyme ment. (1.782-786)

The scene with the Gentlywoman may also draw upon another literary source, Leon Battista Alberti's *Virtus* (1494), one of his *Intercentales* or « Dinner Pieces ». This dialogue between Mercury and Virtue was itself a conscious imitation of the Lucianic style and mode, and was even printed

21. Branham R.B., *Unruly Eloquence*, *op. cit.*, p. 142-143.

22. Robinson C., *Lucian and His Influence in Europe*, London, Duckworth, 1979; Jones C.F., *Culture and Society in Lucian*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard Univ. Press, 1986, especially p. 33-35; Duncan D., *Ben Jonson and the Lucianic Tradition*, 1979, p. 1-41; D'Ascia L., « Humanist Culture and Literary Invention in Ferrara at the Time of the Dossi », in Ciammitti L., Ostrow S.F., & Settis S. (eds.), *Dosso's Fate: Printing and Court Culture in Renaissance Italy*, Los Angeles, The Getty Research Institute Publications, 1998, p. 309-332.

23. Axton R. & Happé P., *The Plays of John Heywood*, *op. cit.*, p. 52 and 298; Forest-Hill L., « Lucian's Satire of Philosophers in Heywood's *Play of the Wether* », *op. cit.*

among Lucian's works in Italy in 1525. In it Virtue waits at Jupiter's door in the hope of an audience in which she can complain about her ill-treatment at the hands of Fortune. She has, however, been put off with ever more trivial excuses, being told, for example, that all the gods are busy checking that butterflies have correctly coloured wings, or that the pumpkins are flowering in the proper way. Thus she appeals to Mercury to intercede with the father of the gods on her behalf. He, having listened to her suit, chooses not to intervene, however, and advises her instead to lay low until Fortune's hostility subsides: another « mery » and politically quiescent « solution » to a problem. The dialogue was the inspiration for two works by the Ferrarese painter Dosso Dossi, both given the modern titles *Jupiter, Mercury, and Virtue*, one, a painting of c. 1524 now in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, the other a fresco in the Sala del Camin Nero in the Castello del Buonconsiglio, in Trent<sup>24</sup>. Thus, if the Gentlywoman evoked echoes of Alberti's *Virtue* as well as of Henry's *Anne*, this may well have helped to mitigate some of the potential controversy that the scene might otherwise have aroused.

Certainly Heywood shows no sign of having caught a tiger by the tail, despite what may be quite bawdy references to the prospect of the king's change of wives. How was it that the playwright felt able to treat such subjects in so open – and so openly comic – a fashion in a courtly play? A number of cultural traditions provided Heywood with the licence to play with royal (and divine) authority in the ways that Mery Report contrives to do. But each brought with it its own ambiguities and internal tensions. The notion of good counsel, already alluded to, and the principle that drama, like literature and art more generally, could provide a mirror in which princes might view both good and bad examples and judge their own behaviour by analogy, these were medieval ideas that gained added impetus from humanist educational theory with its turn towards panegyric, offering opportunities for the playwright to couch political advice and personal criticism in improving, moral terms. The classical

24. For English readers, the dialogue is most readily accessible in Fallico A.B. & Shapiro H. (eds. and trans.), *Renaissance Philosophy, I: The Italian Philosophers, Selected Readings from Petrarch to Bruno*, New York, Random House, 1967, p. 31–33. For the relationship between Dosso's images and Alberti's text, see Ciammitti L., « Dosso as a Storyteller: reflections on His Mythological Paintings », in Ciammitti L., Ostrow S.F., & Settis S. (eds.), *Dosso's Effie, op. cit.*, p. 83–113. I am very grateful to my colleague Dr Anne Marie D'Arcy for suggesting to me the similarity in scenarios of Heywood's interlude and Dosso's paintings.

sources from which the play borrowed the outline of its plot (such as it is) and much of its ethos, chiefly Lucian's dialogues, but also the comic dramatic tradition of Plautus and Terence, in which mischievous servants play familiarly with their less street-wise masters<sup>25</sup>, similarly gave Heywood license both to portray Jupiter in a comic mode and to touch on some sensitive contemporary cultural nerves. But awareness of these traditions does not quite prepare one for the degree of audacity with which the playwright deploys his material in presenting the character of Jupiter, most obviously in that long speech of self-explanation and justification which opens the play, to which I will turn in the latter part of this chapter, before returning to the « hows » and « whys » of Heywood's motivation in the final moments.

### Playing Jupiter

The crucial aspect of Jupiter as a literary and iconographic figure – the factor that arguably commended him to Lucian as well as to humanists like Erasmus and Heywood – was that he was profoundly, indeed fundamentally, ambivalent. He was a god with many attributes, many roles and embodiments, and a complex and deeply ambivalent personal and sexual history. For every story that revealed his wisdom and benevolence there was another that betrayed his self-interest, lust, or manipulative nature. He was, as Frances van Keuren has recently suggested, a symbol of both potent personal authority and of magisterial, even profligate male sexuality, « the ever-potent father of countless gods and mortals, most of whom were conceived outside the... marriage bed »<sup>26</sup>. He was a father and a ruler, but he was also an adulterer, a rapist, and a paedophile (Hardly the sort of figure to sit easily with Henry VIII's current assertions of the impeccable moral reasons behind his need to be released from his marriage to Catherine of Aragon). Even his control over the weather, the aspect of his

25. Burnett M.T., *Masters and Servants in English Renaissance Drama and Culture: Authority and Obedience*, Basingstoke, Macmillan Press Ltd, 1997, especially p. 80 and following. Burnett suggests (p. 81) that the trickster-servant character's « pleasure in his own inventiveness », with other of his characteristics, mark a new departure in the dramaturgy of late sixteenth and seventeenth century England. But all the features of the figure that he describes seem present and well developed in Mery Report.

26. van Keuren F. (ed.), *Myth, Sexuality and Power: Images of Jupiter in Western Art, Archaeologia Transatlantica XVI*, 1998, Providence Rhode Island and Louvain-la-Neuve, 1998, p. xi.

authority that is the focus of attention in Heywood's play, was a site of deep contradiction, for his use of that power, as readers of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* would have been aware, was all too often capricious, self-interested, and intimately bound up with his own libidinous agenda, as when, in Ovid's Book I, he gathered clouds and darkness to inhibit the flight of the nymph Io and to cover his sexual assault upon her.

Hence any representation of Jupiter, and any statement about him carried a potential for double meaning. He was a text that always already carried its own parodic subtext with it. Even the brief account of his adoption of supreme power offered in the opening lines alluded to a contested mythological narrative, a story in which Jupiter was either a conquering hero or a usurping tyrant, depending upon one's viewpoint. While the dominant tradition saw Jupiter's conquest of his father Saturn as instigating the Age of Reason, a period of justice and plenty as noble in its own way as the preceding Golden Age, a rival tradition interpreted it as doing precisely the reverse. In the *Epitomes* of the third century Christian euhemerist Lactantius, the Golden Age of Saturn was interpreted, following the inspiration of Hesiod, as the age of monotheism, universal peace and morality; a period brought to an end by Jupiter's usurpation and his establishment of a cult in his own honour. What followed was the fallen age of Jupiter, the time of men, of division, of the seasons, and hence, significantly for our purposes, of variations in the weather. In this model, then, the Original Sin was the pride of the divine monarch himself rather than that of his mortal subjects<sup>27</sup>. Hence, when Heywood's Jupiter reminds the audience of his relationship to his « auncyent » father, Saturn, he was drawing their attention to a story with more than one possible moral. And it will be the argument of this chapter that Heywood exploited such ambiguities to the full before an educated audience that was well equipped to appreciate them.

Jupiter, as he is presented in the interlude, is magisterial, certainly, but in a humorous, ironic vein rather than a straightforwardly portentous one. The title-page of the printed text is unequivocal – if somewhat bathetic – in

its description of the character as « Jupiter, a god », but this is of little help in describing the nature and impact of the role. The question arises, what did contemporary audiences, who did not have the benefit of this explanatory list of *dramatis personæ* before them, see when they looked at this Jupiter, and (perhaps more importantly in a culture that habitually spoke of going to *hear* a play) what did they hear from him when he spoke?

The visual impact of the figure raises some interesting possibilities. As Axton and Happé suggest, the actor may well have worn a golden mask and crown, as those playing the god-king at John's College, Cambridge did in the 1540s<sup>28</sup>. Such props would have acted as markers of royalty and dignified otherness, and would have associated the character with the iconographic tradition behind representations of God the Father and the risen Christ in the religious drama, where gilded faces and masks were also used. But if, as has been suggested, Jupiter was played here by a child-actor (of whatever age), then much if not all of the potential dignity and grandeur of the role may have been compromised in performance. What audiences would have seen was not maturity and authority but the reverse: all the more so given that the majority of the god-king's scenes placed him alongside Mery Report, probably played, as we have seen, by Heywood himself, who seems to have been tall, even by adult standards<sup>29</sup>. Hence the conscious harping upon distinctions of height and age in the play (Jupiter refers to Mery Report as « sonne » or « my sonne » on numerous occasions<sup>30</sup>; little Dick, the Boy – specifically referred to on two occasions as « the leſajst [i.e. shortest] that can play » – refers to Jupiter as his « godfather », and puns on « greatness », height, and « unmissability »<sup>31</sup> with Mery Report) would serve further to widen the disjunction between human actor and divine role, character and performance that I will discuss further below. And if, as Axton and Happé suggest<sup>32</sup>, Mery Report consciously alludes to the figure of Mercury/Hermes (the son of Zeus) in his costuming, the paternal relationship would be more literal (and incongruous), and might create a further visual « pun », Mercury's *caduceus* doubling as the Tudor household servant's rod of office<sup>33</sup>.

27. Lactantius, *The Epitome of the Divine Institutes*, cap. 10, *Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum*, Vienna, 1866. The attitude towards Jupiter can be judged from the following rhetorical questions concerning him: « Why, therefore, is he called best and greatest, since he both contaminated himself with filth, which is the part of one who is unjust and bad, and feared a greater than himself, which is the part of one who is weak and inferior? » (*ibid.*). The Sibylline Oracles took a similar line (Boas C., *Primitivism and Related Ideas in the Middle Ages*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1048, D. 12-28).

28. Axton R. & Happé P., *The Plays of John Heywood*, *op. cit.*, p. 290.

29. *Ibid.*

30. For the former, see, for example, I. 161, 786, 1123, for the latter, I. 244 and 342.

31. See I. 1000-1005.

32. Axton R. & Happé P., *The Plays of John Heywood*, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 26, note.

For those schooled in the traditions and history of ancient Rome, moreover, the idea of playing Jupiter was already rich with implicit ironies concerning claims to omnipotence and pomposity. For, in the central Roman ceremony of the triumph, the honourand enacted just such an impersonation of Jupiter, even down to the use of face-paint. On the day of the triumph, the *triumphator* was driven in a two-wheeled chariot—the *currus triumphalis*—to the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus, where he would achieve his apotheosis and make his sacrifice to the *optimus maximus*. He did so clad in the *ornatus Iovis*: the embroidered purple toga and tunic that were—depending upon which source one follows—either those that normally adorned the statue of the god himself, or replicas of those garments. Carrying in his left hand a laurel branch and in his right a sceptre crowned with an eagle, Jove's bird, the *triumphator* appeared transfigured, his hands and face covered with the pungent red pigment cinnabar (another borrowing from representations of the god, redolent of his adopted otherness and divinity), while above his head (which already bore a laurel coronet) a slave held the heavy golden *corona Etrusca* (again, perhaps, taken from the statue of Jupiter Capitoline). But, famously, as he neared his apotheosis, that same slave (a figure with more than a passing resemblance to the role played by Mery Report in the interlude) would repeat in his ear the words « *Respice post te, hominem te esse memento* »: « Think of what follows; remember that you are a man ». To play Jupiter was, then, even for the victorious Roman commander in his pomp, also to be reminded of how far short of divinity a human actor really was<sup>34</sup>.

### Heywood's Jupiter and the Rhetoric of Supremacy

If the visual presentation of Jupiter creates comic distinctions between role and performance, the aural element—the words he speaks—most obviously in his opening speech, create still more potent ironic effects. There is an interesting, and potentially paradoxical tension in the opening speech between the god's eternal and immutable aspirations and the merely temporal and contingent nature of the events and powers he describes. That he is, as he claims, « Beyond the compas of all comparyson » (l. 9) and has possessed an matchless glory since his father's fall in « auncyent »

34. Versnel H.S., *Triumphus: An Inquiry into the Origin, Development, and Meaning of the Roman Triumph*, Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1970, especially p. 1-6 and 56-93.

times, sits awkwardly against the stress upon the present moment (« at this season » and « for tyme present ») as the zenith of his powers:

For syns that heven and erth were fyrste create  
Stode we never in suche tryumphaunt estate  
As we now do [...]. (l. 13-15)

Jupiter's « auncyent estate » seems to have been very recently created (or perhaps, as Axton and Happé suggest, it (like Henry VIII's Royal Supremacy) is an « ancient » jurisdiction that has been « rediscovered », having been there all along, unnoticed and un-thought-of, until its (re)assertion by a « parliament [...] late assembled »)<sup>35</sup>.

The speech begins with an extended *occupatio* that effectively casts doubt upon the supposedly self-evident nature of the truth it seeks to establish.

Ryght farre to[o] long as now were to recytle  
The auncyent estate wherin our selfe hath reyned,  
What honour, what laude, gyven us of very ryght,  
What glory we have had dewly unfayned  
Of eche creature whych dewty hath constryned [...]. (l. 1-5)

If we so have ben as treuth yt is in dede  
Beyond the compas of all comparyson,

35. Axton R. & Happé P., *The Plays of John Heywood*, op. cit., p. 288. It is just conceivable that Heywood is here indulging in an additional erudite reference, playing with the kind of objections raised by St. Augustine concerning Jupiter's paradoxical nature with regard to time, he being supposedly both « an eternal divinity » and the son of Saturn, who was taken by association between Chronus and Kronos to be Time itself. « We interpret Saturn to be universal time, which his Greek name shows. For he is called *Chronus*, which by the addition of an aspirate, is the name of Time. Wherefore also in Latin he is called *Saturnus*, as if he were saturated with years. What now should be done with those who, trying to interpret in a better fashion the names and images of their gods, confess that their major god, father of the others, is time, I do not know. For what else do they mean than that all their gods are temporal, whose father they set up as time itself? Their more recent Platonic philosophers, who have been living in Christian times, have been ashamed on this account. And they have tried to interpret the name *Saturnus* otherwise [...]. For they saw how absurd it was, if Jupiter were to be held to be the son of time, he whom they either thought of, or wished others to think of, as eternal [...]. » Augustine, *De consensu evangelistarum*, lib I, cap. 23, in Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, XXXIV, p. 1057 sqq., quoted and translated in Boas G., *Primitivism and Related Ideas in the Middle Ages*, op. cit., p. 196-197. See also Klibansky R., Panofsky E., & Saxl F., *Saturn and Melancholy*, op. cit., p. 162-163. For a useful discussion of the Kronos figure, see Panofsky E., « Father Time », in *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Arts of the Renaissance*, Torchbook edition, London, Harper and Row, 1962, p. 69-94.

Who coulde presume to shew for any mede  
 So that yt myght appere to humayne reason  
 The hye renowme we stande in at this season?  
 For syns that heven and erth were fyrste create  
 Stode we never in suche triumphaunt estate  
 As we now do, wherof we woll reporte  
 Suche parte as we se mete for tyme present,  
 Chyefely concernynge your perpetuall conforte  
 As the thyng [it]selfe shall prove in experyment,  
 Whyche hyely shall bynde you on knees lowly bent  
 Soonly to honour oure hyenes[s] day by day.  
 And now to the mater gyve eare and we shall say. (l. 8-21)

The assertive digressions and qualifications (« If we so have ben [...] »  
 « As the thyng [it]selfe shall prove [...] ») that qualify rather better than  
 they assert the points being made, the insistence upon the need to dem-  
 onstrate and verify those claims (« So that yt might appere to humayne  
 reason » [l. 11], « As the thyng [it]selfe shall prove in experyment » [l. 18]),  
 coupled with the repeated assertion that such things are beyond merely  
 mortal comprehension, all add up to a speech that ultimately registers  
 self-contradiction and inadequacy rather than omnipotence. While the  
 final determination to return to the point (« And now to the mater gyve  
 eare and we shall say [...] » [l. 21]), merely points up the digressive, indi-  
 rect nature of what has gone before.

The language of consent and consensus dominates Jupiter's account  
 of his supremacy (« They have in conclusyon holly surrendryd/Into our  
 handes [...] /The full of theyr powrs for terme everlastynge » [l. 71-74] – a  
 surrender « as of our parte, no parte requyred/But of all theyr partyes  
 ryght humbly desyred » [l. 76-77]). But despite this, and despite his talk  
 of the tranquility and comfort that his regime will bring to all, this is not  
 one of those long opening speeches that in the mouth of God the Father  
 in the Cycles or virtues such as Mercy in the Moralities would call for  
 understatement and a calm, measured delivery. Such speeches, helpfully  
 described by Alexandra Johnston as informed by a stagecraft of stillness,  
 are central to the essentially Augustinian moral and theological econo-  
 mies of the overtly Christian drama. In such plays the calm, wholeness,  
 and stasis of virtue are set against a fragmented prosody and the freneti-  
 cally *active* dramaturgy of evil<sup>36</sup>. But the cadences of Jupiter's speech are

not those of scripture or moral treatises, and the vocabulary avoids the  
 heavily Latinate terms of Mercy's invocation of the presiding values of  
*Mankind*. Jupiter's speech echoes rather (as I shall suggest more fully in a  
 moment) the assertive, repetitive, tones and convoluted syntax of statute  
 or government propaganda. And it does so in ways that seem to subvert  
 the authoritative resonances of that language rather than reinforce them.  
 The speech calls, not for the understated, self-effacing delivery of a Mercy,  
 who subordinates « character » to the dictates of regular meter and syntax,  
 but a far more proactive, performative delivery, alive to the many poten-  
 tial ironies in the lines. The syntax itself, the enjambment of lines and  
 over-run stanza breaks, the insistent rhymes, and the very distinctively  
 Heywoodian delight in puns and repetitions (« Whyche thyng, as of our  
 parte, no parte requyred/But of all theyr partyes ryght humbly desyred »  
 [l. 76-77]), turning a single word over and over on the tongue until every  
 possible flavour, sense, and nuance has been explored – all these suggest  
 a self-conscious cleverness and a delight in language for its own sake that  
 detract attention from what is being said to how it is being said, by whom,  
 and for what effect. This is a speech of striving, of potentially self-entan-  
 gling persuasiveness, rather than of calm authority, a vaunting that has  
 reminded some critics of the ineffectual boasting of a Pilate or the bathos  
 of the York Herod, who talks of both felled giants and slaughtered swans  
 in the same breath<sup>37</sup>.

But Jupiter does not rant and threaten in the manner of Herod, Pilate,  
 or the other tyrants of the religious drama. As Stephen May pointed out  
 in an early issue of *Medieval English Theatre*, what distinguishes tyrants  
 from good kings in such plays tends to be, not *whether* they threaten but  
*whom* they threatened. Tyrants raged against Christians, whereas good  
 kings menaced pagans and the enemies of Christ<sup>38</sup>. But beyond a passing  
 reference to his commanding a loyalty from his subjects that « shall bynde

Medieval Dramaturgy », *European Medieval Drama* 2, 1998, p. 1-19; but see also Dillon J.,  
*Language and Stage in Medieval and Renaissance England*, Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press,  
 1998, p. 54-69.

37. For Herod's swans (« Agaynst jeauntis ongentill have we joined with ingendis,/And  
 swannys pat are swymmyng to oure sweetnes schall be swappd », York, *Christ before Herod*,  
 l. 14-15) see Walker G., *Medieval Drama*, op. cit., p. 112. For the comparison between Jupiter and  
 Herod, see Axton R. & Happé P., *The Plays of John Heywood*, op. cit., p. 288 sqq. (« The antithesis  
 and witty play on sound and sense [in the "hyely... lowly" pun] barely conceal a vaunt of  
 absolute power that links Jupiter with the boasting tyrants of the miracle play stage »).

38. May S., « Good Kings and Tyrants: A Reassessment of the Regal Figure on the Medieval  
 Stage », *Medieval English Theatre* 5: 2, 1982, p. 87-102.

36. Johnston A.F., « "At the Still Point of the Turning World": A Augustinian Roots of

you on knees lowly bent » (l. 19), Jupiter threatens no one. He thus seems neither very tyrannical nor truly « good ». What Jupiter does is talk lovingly about his superiority to his fellow gods, his wisdom, and his powers. There is pomposity here, certainly, and a degree of deflating self-contradiction, as we have seen, but little of the frantic vitriol that marks the villainy of the York Pilate.<sup>39</sup>

As he recounts the debate in the Olympian parliament, Jupiter's delivery becomes brisker, and the subordinate clauses in his speech more purposeful, with each end-stopped stanza adding a further sense unit to the narrative (l. 36-63). But as soon as he returns to talking about himself, he falls back into the introverted, enjambment-ridden manner of speaking that characterised the opening stanzas.

And also that we, evermore beyng,  
Besyde our puyssaunt power of deite,  
Of wysedome and nature so noble and fre –  
From all extremytees the meane devydyng,  
To pease and plente eche thyng attempterige –  
They have in conclusion holly surrendered [...] (l. 66-71 *sqq.*)

The convoluted syntax, the repeated deferral of the completion of the main clause by the accumulation of repeated variations on a given theme, all of these traits are characteristic, not of the blustering tyrants of the Cycle plays, but of Henrician statute and proclamation. The rhythms of Jupiter's speech, I would argue, betray Heywood's acute ear for the cadences and tropes of Henrician public utterances, the same sensitivity to the language and tones of formal situations and specific groups and communities that informed the legal pastiches of the *Play of Love* or the confessional polemic in *The Pardoner and The Frere*. Perhaps there is even a direct echo of the Act of Appeals (1533) itself here, the founding document of Henrician « imperial » authority, which, beyond its famously sonorous opening declaration, enacts just such a piling-up of syntactically tortuous, sense-deferring clauses in search of a full-stop, and the gathering together of at times near synonymous words and phrases without the drawing of any obvious distinctions between them. Extensive quotation from the first paragraph of the Act (in

39. « The cursed creatures bat cruelly are cryand, / Restreyhe you for stryvyng for strength of my strakis: / Your pleyntes in my presence use plately applyand, / Or ellis pis brande in youre braynes schalle brestis and brekis », *Christ Before Pilate 1: The Dream of Pilate's Wife*, 1-4, in Walker G., *Medieval Drama*, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

reality a single extended and seemingly infinitely extendable sentence) will both give a sense of the text as a whole that takes one beyond the apparent succinctness of the endlessly quoted opening clause, and indicate the habitual modes of Henrician statute more generally.

Where by divers sundry old authentic histories and chronicles it is manifestly declared and expressed that this realm of England is an Empire, and so hath been and accepted in the world, governed by one supreme head and king having the dignity and royal estate of the imperial crown of the same, unto whom a body politic, compact of all sorts and degrees of people, divided in terms and by names of spirituality and temporality, be bounden and owen to bear next to God a natural and humble obedience; he being also institute and furnished by the goodness and sufferance of Almighty God with plenary, whole, and entire power, pre-eminence, authority, prerogative, and jurisdiction to render and yield justice and final determination to all manner of folk residents or subjects within this realm, in all causes, matters, debates, and contentions, happening to occur, insurge, or begin within the limits thereof, without restraint or provocation to any foreign princes or potentates of the world, the body spiritual having power when any cause of the law divine happened to come in question or of spiritual learning, then it was declared, interpreted, and shewed by that part of the said body politic, called the spirituality, now being usually called the English Church, which always hath been reputed and also found of that sort that both for knowledge, integrity, and sufficiency of number, it hath always been thought and is also at this hour sufficient and meet of itself, without the inter-meddling of any exterior person or persons, to declare and determine all such doubts and to administer all such offices and duties as to their room spiritual doth appertain; for the due administration whereof and to keep them from corruption and sinister affection the king's most noble progenitors, and the antecessors of the nobles of this realm, have sufficiently endowed the said Church both with honours and possessions: and the laws temporal for trial of propriety of lands and goods, and for the conservation of the people of this realm in unity and peace without ravin or spoil, was and yet is administered, adjudged, and executed, by sundry judges and administrators of the other part of the said body politic called the

temporality, and both their authorities and jurisdictions, do conjoin together in the due administration of justice, the one to help the other [...].<sup>40</sup>

More closely analogous still, within a year of the notional date for the performance of *Wether*, the Act of Parliament that formally recognized Henry as Supreme Head of the Church in England was to make a very similar claim to that advanced in Jupiter's speech, announcing, with a very Jupiter-like flourish and seemingly unconscious irony, that, although the king's authority over « his » church was manifest, just, and universally recognised within the realm, it was nonetheless necessary to announce and establish it in the present parliament in statutory form.

Albeit the King's Majesty, justly and rightfully is and oweth to be the supreme head of the Church of England, and so is recognised by the clergy of this realm in their convocations, yet nevertheless for corroboration and confirmation thereof, and for increase of virtue in Christ's religion within this realm of England, and to repress and extirp all errors, heresies, and other enormities and abuses heretofore used in the same, Be it enacted [...] that the king our sovereign lord, his heirs and successors kings of this realm, shall be taken, accepted, and reputed the only supreme head in earth of the Church of England called *Anglicana Ecclesia*, and shall have and enjoy annexed and united to the imperial crown of this realm as well the title and style thereof, as all honours, dignities, pre-eminences, jurisdictions, privileges, authorities, immunities, profits, and commodities, to the said dignity of supreme head of the same church belonging and appertaining.<sup>41</sup>

There may also, in some of Jupiter's more delightfully self-regarding utterances (« And now, accordyng to your obedyens/Rejoyce ye in us wyth joy most joyfully,/And we our selfe shall joy in our owne glory » [l. 183-185]; « we nede no whyte our selfe any farther to bost,/For our dedes declare us apparauntly [...]/Our prudens hath made peace unyversally./Whyche thyng, we sey, recordeth us as pryncypall/God and governour of heven,

40. Luders A. (ed.), *Statutes of the Realm*, 9 vols., London, HMSO, 1810-1824, III, p. 427-599.  
41. *Ibid.*, III, p. 492 (An Act for the King's Highness to be Supreme Head of the Church of England and to have authority to reform and redress all errors, heresies, and abuses in the same).

yerth, and all. » [l. 1241-1242, 1245-1247]), be conscious echoes of the kind of vaunting descriptions of Henry's qualities to be found in statutes such as the Act Concerning the Pardon of the Clergy of 1531 (which talked of « his Highness, having always tender eye with mercy and pity and compassion towards his said spiritual subjects, minding of his high goodness and great benignity so always to impart the same unto them as justice being daily administered, all rigour be excluded »), and would later produce, in the Act Concerning Payment of First Fruits and Tenths of 1534, a description of the king as his subjects « most dread, benign, and gracious Sovereign Lord, upon whom and in whom dependeth all their joy and wealth, in whom also is united and knit so princely a heart and courage, mixed with mercy, wisdom, and justice, and also a natural affection joined to the same, as by the great, inestimable, and benevolent arguments thereof being most bountifully, largely, and many times shewed, ministered, and approved towards his loving and obedient subjects hath well appeared, which requireth a like correspondence of gratitude to be considered according to their most bounden duties ».<sup>42</sup>

Heywood seems, then, to be playing with a range of representations of Henry VIII in this presentation of Jupiter, drawing his inspiration from both earlier classical and courtly entertainments and the King's official self-presentation in proclamations, speeches to parliament, and statutes. And what he creates from this bricolage of ingredients is not a god-king awesome and magisterial in the full panoply of his new-found, « ancient » powers, but a monarch with feet (and very possibly other body-parts) of clay. He turns an association between the English King and his Olympian counterpart inside out and then back again, turning what had been a panegyric device in Skelton's *Speke, Parrot* into a much more mischievous exploration of Henry VIII's current political and marital ambitions. It is a relatively affectionate portrait, certainly, far from the contemptible tyrants of the religious drama, but it is a deeply ironic and « mery » portrait nonetheless.<sup>43</sup>

To return to our initial questions of motivation and significance: what Heywood's treatment of Jupiter suggests, then, is a clear sense of license on the part of the playwright to touch upon highly sensitive political and

42. 22 Henry VIII, c.15, cited in Elton C.R., *The Tudor Constitution: Documents and Commentary*, 2nd edition, Cambridge, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1982, p. 346-347; and 26 Henry VIII, c.3, *Statutes of the Realm*, III, p. 493, cited in EHD V, p. 746-747.

43. This qualifies the view advanced in Walker, 1991, p. 144 and following.

personal issues central to the king's current preoccupations in a comic vein, apparently without fear of recriminations, and seemingly in the expectation of a favourable reception. Heywood's aim, in part at least, would seem to have been to open an obvious ironic distance between the vaunting language of Jupiter's assertions and the more pragmatic realities of political action – or, as here, of inaction – required to solve the dilemmas raised during the play. Just as the god-king's claims to absolute and immutable power and authority prove largely irrelevant to the situation in which he finds himself in the play, so the drama suggests that the language of those Henrician proclamations and statutes associated with the Break with Rome and the Supremacy – the vaunting, discursive language that Sir Geoffrey Elton associated with the ministry of Thomas Cromwell and the notional revolution in government that Elton claimed he inspired, but which is now linked more generally with the team of scholars and bureaucrats around Edward Fox that Henry established to provide documentary ammunition for the divorce campaign and went on to provide the theoretical basis of the Supremacy as well – so that language, and the authority it proclaims are equally inappropriate in the context of the disputes provoked around the Reformation Parliament<sup>44</sup>. The moral of the play – if we can think in such simplistic terms for a moment – seems thus to have been the same as that of Heywood's roughly contemporaneous interludes *The Four PP* and *The Pardoner and the Frere*: the best response to the current wave of confessional strife was not inflammatory rhetoric and radical legislative action, especially not of an anticlerical kind, but sober common sense and tolerant accommodation<sup>45</sup>. Rather than assert new and unsettling powers, the King is best advised to restore the *status quo ante*, allowing all sides to assume that they have got what they wanted, albeit if only for some of the time.

Such an ironic, comedic approach to contemporary politics relies, of course, on a number of assumptions: that the king is willing to listen, and willing to accept such well-intentioned, « mery » criticism cast in

44. Elton G.R., *The Tudor Revolution in Government: Administrative Changes in the Reign of Henry VIII*, Cambridge, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1953; *Id.*, *Policy and Police: The Enforcement of the Reformation in the Age of Thomas Cromwell*, Cambridge, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1972; *Id.*, *Reform and Renewal: Thomas Cromwell and the Common Weal*, Cambridge, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1973; Nicholson G., « The Act of Appeals and the English Reformation », in Cross C., Loades D., & Scarisbrick J.J. (eds.), *Law and Government Under the Tudors*, Cambridge, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1988, p. 19-30.

45. Walker G., *The Politics of Performance in Early Renaissance Drama*, *op. cit.*, p. 51-75.

an « Erasmanian vein » on a matter close to his heart. It assumes that the « private » Henry VIII, the man who would take Thomas More by the arm in his garden and encourage him to argue politics with him, the king who had told his counsellors in 1519 that they should tell him if ever those close to him – and by implication he himself – ever began to behave inappropriately, was detachable from the sovereign of public policies and formal utterances, that Henry was able to read his own publicity ironically, see the joke in Jupiter, and take the point. It may well have been that March 1533 was the last moment at which such assumptions held good at court, and at which a writer in Heywood's position was able to attempt such liberties with the king, risking Jove's thunderbolts in order to offer him the good counsel that all princes needed. Within little more than a year such confidence in the capacity of literature and drama, and of well-intentioned good counsel more generally, to speak harsh truths to power in Henry VIII's England would, of course, be in tatters, and the experience of the small circle of writers, entertainers, and scholars around More and the courtly humanists would be engaged with the far more earnest endeavour to find a mode of operating at court, and remaining true to their ideals, that did not run the risk of condign punishment of a very earthly and murderous kind.

## Appendix

### Mery Report and the Royal Household

Mery Report claims, on returning to the place after issuing his proclamation, to be « squire for goddes precyous body » (l. 191), but this may be merely wishful thinking on his part, and intended to raise a laugh from a knowledgeable courtly audience. The precise gradations of office-holding and service within the chamber and Privy Chamber were, of course, matters of acute concern and sensitivity, with the duties and rewards of each post being stipulated in the various ordinances and regulations to prevent individuals either claiming greater status, responsibilities, or perquisites than their offices warranted or evading their more onerous duties.

The *Black Book* of Edward IV provided for four esquires for the body, each of whom must be « noble of conditions » (which Mery Report clearly is not), of whom two should « alwey be attendaunt uppon the kynges person to aray and unray hym, to wache day and ny[gh]t, [and] to dresse



hym in his clothes ». The post was a highly sensitive one (« their business is many secretes », observed the *Black Book*), and carried a not inconsiderable status. Its occupants could claim for the upkeep of two servants each as well as for their own wages, livery, and bouge of court. Below the esquires, socially at least, were the gentlemen ushers of the Chamber, of whom there were also four, working in two shifts of two. Their responsibilities included « continually » sitting « at mete and sopers in the kinges chambre to see everything done in dew order and to kepe silence [...] Also [...] to sett all the astates, gentylis, and straungers at the bourdes in the kinges chambre in dew order [...] Hym owith to be cunnyng, curteys, and glad to receve, towche, and direct every man in serves doying, and to know all the custumes and cerimoniez used aboute the king and other astates according whan they cum ». « He assigneth the yomen of the crown and chambre, gromez, and pagez, to attendauncez and other busynes inwarde and outwarde for the king ». Beneath the gentlemen ushers in rank and status, and responsible to them, were the four yeomen of the Chamber, some of whom were appointed to « make beddes, to bere or hold torches, to sett bourdes, to apparayle all chambres, and suche othyr servyce as the chaumbrelayn or [gentlemen] usshers of the chambre command or assign, to attende the chambre; to wache the kinge by course [i.e. by turns]; [and] to go messagez ». Two of these yeomen of the Chamber were appointed yeomen ushers, and their duties (as we shall see) concerned the micro-management of the Chamber. All of these yeomen could appoint servants of their own. Below the yeomen were the ten grooms of the Chamber, who performed a range of more manual chores, carrying wood, straw, and rushes into the Chamber, making fires, etc. They shared one servant between every two of them, slept two to a bed, and took a penny a day in wages. Finally, beneath even the grooms were the four pages of the Chamber who performed the lowliest and most menial of tasks, and shared a single « child » who acted as servant to all four of them (and who was thus the very lowest of the very low in the Chamber hierarchy). It fell to the pages « to wayte uppon and to kepe clene the kinges chambre, and most honest fro fautes of houndez as other, and to help trusse and bere harneys, cloth, sakes, and other thinges necessary as they be commaunded by suche as are above them »<sup>46</sup>.

46. See Myers A.R., *The Household of Edward IV*, op. cit., p. 111-121.

In this hierarchy of offices, Mery Report's role would seem to correspond most closely to that of the yeoman usher of the Chamber<sup>47</sup>. The Eltham Ordinances would subsequently elaborate upon the duties of this office, instructing its holders to be at the Chamber door by 8 o'clock in the morning « at the farthest [i.e. the latest] [...] to attend and take the charge thereof, and not to depart from the same, except he deliver the same charge to some other yeoman [...] and that he permitt nor suffer any man to come in the same chamber, but lords, knights, gentlemen, officers of the King's house, and other honest personages, as by his wisdom and discretion shall be thought good ». He should also « have good regard upon all the personages being within the said chamber », and be ready to « incontinently expel » anyone « not convenient to be therein ». Such a discretionary, door-keepers role would seem to be precisely the one the Vice goes on to perform in the play. But, given that, in the series of Articles drawn up in the reign of Henry VII, similar responsibilities to keep the doors of the privy chamber and the dining chamber were given to the esquires of the body and the gentlemen ushers respectively, it may well be that the distinctions in play were very subtle ones<sup>48</sup>. Part of the joke probably relied upon the fact that Mery Report, a man apparently from a social class suited only for the post of yeoman usher, tries to adopt the manners and responsibilities of a gentleman or esquire (although he has none of the intimate duties prescribed by Ciammitti for the esquires for the body nor the supervisory responsibilities of the gentlemen ushers), hence the Vice's pointed reference upon entering the place to his « brother » among the crowd who was evidently one of the torch-bearers in the hall; for, as we have seen, one of the duties of the yeomen of the Chamber was « to bere and hold torches ».

47. See Walker G., *Plays of Persuasion*, op. cit., p. 138-141.  
48. See The Society of Antiquaries, *A History of the City of London*, p. 138-141.